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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 000060

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [EI](#)

SUBJECT: IRELAND FAVORS CLUSTER MUNITIONS TREATY, WILL
ATTEND OSLO CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 6667

Classified By: Political/Economic Section Chief Joe Young; Reasons 1.4
(B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ireland supports movement toward an international treaty restricting the use of cluster munitions (CM) and will participate in the February 22-23 CM conference in Oslo, according to the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). Ireland, however, continues to see the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) as the primary forum for pursuing a CM treaty. End summary.

Irish Support for a CM Treaty

¶2. (SBU) Ireland strongly supports efforts to develop a legally binding international treaty to restrict the use of cluster munitions (CM), according to Nicholas Twist, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Deputy Director for Disarmament and Nonproliferation, to whom Pol/Econ Chief delivered refotel demarche on January 23. Twist noted that, since mid-2002, Ireland had voiced concern in Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) fora about the indiscriminate effects of CM and the lack of proportionality between CM military targeting and collateral civilian damage. He cited a statement by the Irish delegation to the November 2006 CCW Review Conference (RevCon) expressing regret that the conference did not yield a more comprehensive mandate to deal with "this grave humanitarian issue." The statement also mentioned that Ireland would "continue to work within the CCW and elsewhere to seek agreement on a legally binding instrument on the use of cluster munitions." Twist added that CM-focused NGOs had recently testified before the Irish Parliament, fueling nonpartisan political support for CM restrictions.

¶3. (SBU) Ireland therefore planned to participate in the February 22-23 CM conference in Oslo. Twist said that the DFA deputy legal advisor, an Irish Department of Defense official, and he himself would represent the Irish Government at the Oslo conference. Twist added that an Irish Defense Department official and a DFA representative would also take part in the April 18-20 experts meeting hosted by the ICRC in Montreaux.

The Lebanon Lesson

¶4. (C) CM deployment during the 2006 Lebanon conflict had heightened international attention to, and Irish concerns

about, such weapons, said Twist. He observed that Irish troops had been involved in the original UNIFIL mission since its inception and had joined the recently reconstituted UNIFIL force. Irish soldiers, said Twist, had witnessed the effects of CM bombing in Lebanon and remained vulnerable to their potential future use, a possibility that weighed on Irish Government leaders. Irish troops involved in securing areas of Lebanon for reconstruction efforts, as well as officials of Irish Aid (the DFA's overseas development assistance arm) operating in other regions of conflict, were also familiar with the difficulties faced by civilian populations in returning to CM-damaged areas.

CCW Still the Primary Forum

15. (C) Ireland was not "shutting the door" on the CCW by participating in the Oslo conference, Twist stressed. Rather, Ireland still viewed the CCW as the primary context for pursuing a CM treaty, and the Irish Government hoped that the Oslo event would be catalytic for CM discussions in the June 19-22 CCW government experts meeting on explosive remnants of war (ERW). Twist added that Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern favored a total CM ban, but realized that the CCW offered the best chance for achieving an effective, if not perfect, treaty that would garner broad international support. Moreover, Ireland was a longstanding, enthusiastic supporter of the UN and wished to work within UN structures, such as the CCW, on arms control issues. Twist ventured that the Norwegian Government had moved forward with the Oslo conference because of exasperation with slow progress on CM within the CCW and also because the prospects for an action-forcing CM discussion at the June CCW experts meeting

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appeared dim.

U.S. not the Major Irish Concern

16. (C) In response to Pol/Econ Chief's points about the reliability/accuracy of U.S. CM and strict U.S. military targeting protocols, Twist noted that other countries, more so than the United States, were Ireland's concern. He remarked that older-generation CM in other countries' weapon stocks had a high "dud" rate, effectively making them landmines-in-waiting. The Lebanon conflict, he added, also gave weight to Ireland's worries that other countries would not deploy CM with U.S.-style scrupulousness. In the Irish view, said Twist, the United States was key to debate on CM restrictions insofar as the USG was a CM supplier and held significant influence in international arms control matters.

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